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## EPA Prioritizes Data, Safety During Today's Gold King Mine Response

Durango, CO – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today stood up a Joint Incident Command (JIC) in Durango, Colorado to coordinate the state, regional, tribal and federal response to the Gold King Mine incident. The agency also announced that EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy will visit Durango, Colorado and Farmington, New Mexico on Wednesday to inspect response efforts relating to the release of waste water from Gold King mine, and meet with local officials and community members.

The JIC's primary goal today was data gathering and quality assessment, in order to ensure the health and safety of all those who live, work and play along the Animas River, San Juan River and Cement Creek. Data is being gathered for water, sediment, and private wells.

Decisions about opening the river for recreational use will be made by the Sheriff's offices in the affected communities. To assist them in making those decisions, EPA is validating new water quality data for the August 7, 8, and 9 period. That data is now being validated by external contractors, and while we cannot release the data points today, we would like to report that the general data trend matches what we've previously released. As soon as the new data has been validated we will release it, along with agency recommendations for local communities to assist them in making determinations about drinking water and agricultural water.

Preliminary results are promising. "From initial sampling results, as the plume has advanced seeing elevated levels, and as it moves on, we are seeing a downward trajectory toward pre-event conditions," said Administrator McCarthy today in Washington, DC.

The administrator's full remarks are available at <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine/epa-administrator-gina-mccarthy-8112015-remarks-gold-king-mine>

New data will be posted on the response website launched today. That site, <http://www2.epa.gov/goldkingmine>, is being regularly updated with data, fact sheets and other information for local residents and for the media.

Local and national media inquiries can now be sent to [press@epa.gov](mailto:press@epa.gov). A phone line has been set to handle local and national media inquiries; that number is 970-812-3351 and will be staffed by press officers within the Joint Unified Command.

In New Mexico, EPA has federal on-scene coordinators, two water quality experts and thirty technicians and contractors responding to the spill as it reaches communities in the state. EPA mobile command center is operational in Farmington. EPA is continuing collecting water quality samples from nine locations in the river near intakes for Aztec, Farmington, Lower Valley Water Users Association, Morning Star Water Supply System and the North Star Water User Association. Each of these locations will continue to be monitored as the spill makes its way past these areas. Additionally, teams of qualified technicians are going door-to-door to collect samples for laboratory analysis.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish biologist and game warden monitoring found wild birds with stains were able to fly and rehabilitation has not been required. NM Game & Fish did not observe any fish kills during yesterday's overflight.

The EPA's Region 9 office, which covers Arizona and the Navajo Nation, continues to be in close communication with the Navajo Nation and is coordinating with them on various efforts including sampling and community outreach. By mid-week, the agency expects to have 15 staff and contractors on site to handle emergency response, water sampling and

communications/coordination with the Navajo Nation and other stakeholders. Region 9 Administrator Jared Blumenfeld plans to visit the area Thursday, going to Farmington, Shiprock and Durango. Community Involvement Coordinators (CICs) are partnering with various Navajo officials, Navajo incident command, and other responding agencies to ensure comprehensive outreach to all affected Navajo Chapters.

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